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WVCW expands into web, cable

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CT STAFF WRITER

Some might say the campus radio station is like the "Phantom of the Opera." It's here but not here. Many students, past and present, have never heard of the station unless they listen to its occasional broadcast in the Hibbs cafeteria. Change, however, is on its way.



Liedtke

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Mike Liedtke, WVCW general manager, said the station soon will launch into cyberspace since its Web site now is complete.

"We are really excited about the Internet right now . . . people are going to be able to catch the shows," Liedtke said.

Lisa Brownlee, the student media director, said WVCW also plans to simulcast via broadband cable through the university's closed circuit cable network.

Transmitting the signal in this manner means anyone with access to the network can tune in to channel 24 and listen to the broadcast. She said many of the major academic buildings have access to the network.

"WVCW is an eclectic mix of punk, college rock, hip hop and metal," said Jon Carpenter, program director of WVCW. "We also feature specialty programming that includes other genres of music, such as country."

"Our main focus is to become a mecca for college students who want to hear punk and hip hop music that is not played on any other station in Richmond."

Liedtke said WVCW hasn't had a broad audience in the past because the Gladding Residence Center has been the only residence hall that can receive a radio frequency signal. He expects the Internet broadcast and the broadband cable simulcast to provide a way for students to hear the station, which should increase their knowledge of it on campus.

"Our problem in the past," Liedtke said, "has been people saying they don't like the Richmond radio stations and that they'd love to listen to ours but can't . . . all they've been able to do is say, 'I really wish I could hear the show.' Now people can listen to us as long as they log on to the Internet and visit our site."

Lawyers are currently reviewing licensing documents.

Robert Fleskes, an adjunct faculty member and a former WVCW general manager who serves as adviser to the station, said having a limited audience is one thing that has remained consistent though the years.

Fleskes, a 1993 VCU graduate, said the station had access to cable FM when he was a student, but then was called Continental Cable and now is AT&T Broadband.

"The most exciting thing for the station today is the advent of the Internet, which

is something that didn't exist when I was a student," Fleskes said. "It's a totally new market out there . . . they have a real opportunity to webcast . . . you start casting live on your Web site and people all across the country can listen; it's amazing."

"It's kind of refreshing. Even before my time the station tried to get an FM signal and become a normal 'open-air' broadcast station but always ran into money problems."

"It never worked then and it never works now, but I think that the Internet is a nice avenue to take."

"There are stations that exist in Los Angeles and New York that only do webcasts and make millions of dollars selling ads and playing great music. I think it's a real good opportunity for us to take advantage of that."

WVCW also improved its production room with the help of the on-call engineer, Sam Straus. Brownlee said the station is considering the airing of play-by-play coverage of VCU athletic events.

Since the station acquired an automation system that plays music and promos constantly, Brownlee said, this is another step pushing the station closer to broadcasting around the clock.

"We've talked for years about going FM and people have had their hopes up and gotten disappointed," she said. "That's what everyone wants to hear . . . I don't want to commit myself to something that I can't deliver."

Since television stations soon will have to go digital, Brownlee said opportunities to move to an analog signal could occur within the next few years.

"I think we first need to explore cable and a broader analog signal," she said. "We must look realistically at figures, keeping money and other resources in mind when attempting to make things happen."

"We're getting there, we've moved step-by-step, we're on the edge . . . it will happen."

WVCW's webcast will begin March 18, and can be heard at <http://www.wvcw.cc>.



Carpenter